

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

July 16, 2001
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Mosher, Deputy Mayor Marshall, Councilmembers Davidson, Degginger, Lee, and Noble¹

ABSENT: Councilmember Creighton

1. Call to Order

Deputy Mayor Marshall opened the meeting at 6:01 p.m. and announced recess to executive session for approximately 30 minutes to discuss one item of pending litigation. The study session resumed at 6:50 p.m. with Mayor Mosher presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Building Code amendment to allow five-story wood framed buildings

City Manager Steve Sarkozy introduced the discussion regarding a proposed Building Code amendment to allow wood framed buildings up to five stories high, with additional fire and life safety features incorporated into their construction. He noted the issue has been reviewed by the City's Construction Code Advisory Committee.

Planning and Community Development Director Matt Terry said this initiative evolved from the City's objectives of: 1) encouraging the availability of more, and particularly affordable, housing, 2) maintaining the ability to compete with cities in the area that now allow five-story wood framed construction, and 3) maintaining and enhancing fire and life safety requirements for wood framed structures.

Mike Brennan, Building Official, said Bellevue's building codes are based on those adopted by the International Conference of Building Officials, the National Fire Protection Association, and the Washington State Building Code Council. The Land Use Code, Building Code, and market factors determine building size within a community. The 1997 Uniform Building Code currently specifies the following for a residential multifamily building:

¹ Councilmember Noble arrived at 6:17 p.m.

- Type V, 1-hour construction
- Maximum area of 42,000 square feet
- Maximum of four stories
- Maximum building height of 50 feet.

Mr. Brennan noted that a fifth story is currently allowed if the first story of the building is constructed of noncombustible material. He displayed photos of examples of this type of structure in Bellevue. All of the buildings have sprinkler systems and fire-resistant components.

Mr. Brennan said the Construction Code Advisory Committee recommends allowing an increase to five stories, a 15-foot increase in building height, and a 25 percent increase in floor area for wood framed structures. Building size can be increased by providing firewalls between portions of the building meeting the maximum square footage. The Construction Code Advisory Committee recommends the following mitigation requirements for five-story wood framed buildings:

- National Fire Protection Association 13 sprinkler system (highest level fire protection sprinkler system) with quick response sprinkler heads.
- Pressurized stair enclosures and elevator shafts.
- Emergency power on site to ensure continuous operation of fire protection systems.
- Monitored automatic fire protection system.
- Structural observation to address shrinkage and compression issues associated with wood construction.

Mr. Brennan said Burien, Everett, Federal Way, Portland, Seattle and Tacoma have all adopted provisions allowing five-story wood framed buildings. Bellingham, Shoreline, and King County are currently considering similar proposals. The Construction Code Advisory Committee feels this offers a cost-effective alternative for builders in Bellevue. Mr. Brennan said the committee recommends that five-story wood framed structures be limited to housing and offices uses.

In response to Mr. Lee, Mr. Brennan said the proposed Building Code amendment would allow noncombustible fire construction, such as concrete, for the first floor topped by five stories of wood framed construction.

In response to Mr. Noble, Fire Marshall Steve Nuttall said the Fire Department has reviewed and is supportive of the proposed Building Code amendment. Mr. Nuttall said the addition of a second Light Force (truck company), approved by Council in the last budget cycle, will be of great benefit in protecting this type of structure.

In response to Mrs. Marshall, Mr. Nuttall said the jurisdictions that have adopted five-story wood framed construction have not experienced any negative, unanticipated impacts. Mrs. Marshall thanked Mr. Degginger, the Construction Code Advisory Committee, Mr. Brennan, and the Fire Department for their review and development of this proposal.

In response to Dr. Davidson, Mr. Brennan said the additional height of 15 feet is consistent with the allowable building height of 65 feet for the next level of construction, Type III. Mr. Terry noted that the additional building height provides greater flexibility for architectural design

features. He said the Land Use Code will continue to control building heights based on zoning designations.

Mr. Degginger said the proposed Building Code amendment will help provide more housing opportunities, particularly in the downtown area. He explained that fire safety issues were thoroughly discussed and evaluated by the Construction Code Advisory Committee and the Fire Department. Mr. Degginger thanked staff for their hard work on this proposal.

In response to Mayor Mosher, Mr. Terry confirmed that wood framed buildings are more affordable than concrete and steel structures.

In response to Mr. Lee, Mr. Brennan said staff is confident the proposed amendment will provide a level of protection equivalent to that provided by four-story wood framed structures and larger concrete and steel structures. Mr. Brennan reviewed the safety features described earlier including quick response sprinklers and pressurized stairwells.

Mayor Mosher noted Council's support of the proposal and asked staff to prepare an ordinance for Council consideration in the near future.

(b) Partnership with Bellevue School District

Mr. Sarkozy introduced the discussion about ways to enhance and expand the City's partnership with the Bellevue School District.

Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran said Bellevue School District's mission of education excellence complements the City's quality of life and economic development goals. In 1994, the City Council and Bellevue School District established a joint resolution formalizing an intent to work as partners to meet the educational, recreational, cultural, and human services needs of the community. Mr. Foran discussed recent examples of these joint efforts including a field scheduling and renovation project, creation of Tyee Community Gym, renovation of Ivanhoe Youth Theatre, and playground renovation projects. The City is now the manager and scheduler of after-school use for all outdoor recreation facilities within the school district, with the exception of high school stadiums. Mr. Foran said the City's recreation programs as well as a number of youth-oriented agencies including Bellevue Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, and Youth Eastside Services (YES) utilize school district facilities for their activities.

Mr. Foran advocated a renewed focus on expanding the partnership between the City and BSD and a long-term strategic approach to programs and services. He discussed the concept of a community school which he defined as a facility that is open beyond the traditional school day to provide academic, extracurricular, recreational, and social services for people of all ages. He reviewed the following principles of a higher performance partnership: community-shared vision, strong leadership, collaborative planning and development, centralized management of community use facilities, shared control, shared costs, and earmarked funding to ensure the operation of community use facilities. Potential outcomes of this approach include: 1) predictable and consistent community access to facilities and programs, 2) higher performance of current resource allocations, 3) more and better sports facilities, and 4) opportunities for neighborhood enhancement.

Mr. Foran requested Council direction to form a staff exploratory committee to examine the partnership principles, identify future partnership opportunities, and develop partnership models and funding options.

Mayor Mosher is pleased with the current joint efforts of the City and BSD and interested in learning more about staff's ideas and recommendations.

Mr. Lee would like staff to explore and identify more opportunities for partnership between the City, BSD, and nonprofit organizations. He said school facilities are used on weekends by groups offering foreign language instruction and he would like to see an expansion of this type of use.

Mrs. Marshall supports the formation of a staff exploratory committee. She recommended involving parents and interested citizens in these discussions. She encouraged a focus beyond sports facilities to include master planning and streamlining permit processes for school projects. Mrs. Marshall suggested involving the Issaquah School District and private schools in the overall strategy as well.

Mr. Degginger expressed support for the proposal and commented that schools are an integral part of the community's quality of life.

Mayor Mosher noted Council consensus to proceed with the creation of a staff exploratory committee to address BSD partnership opportunities.

At 7:53 p.m., Mayor Mosher declared recess to the regular session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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